

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY RANGOON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, BM

SUBJECT: BURMESE COUP PLOT: NEW YORK TIMES COVERAGE

REF: A. STATE 189139, B. RANGOON 2787

THE AUGUST 23 NEW YORK TIMES CARRIED THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE ABOUT THE RECENT COUP PLOT. THE ARTICLE, APPARENTLY BY HENRY KAMM, IS QUOTED BELOW IN ITS ENTIRETY. WE ARE REPLYING TO INQUIRIES ON THE BASIS OF GUIDANCE SET FORTH IN REFTEL A.

BEGIN TEXT U.S. DENIED ASYLUM TO A SUSPECT--RANGOON, BURMA, AUGUST 17

ON THE EVENING OF JULY 2, A FRIGHTENED MAN TURNED UP AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE COMPOUND WHERE THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, DAVID L. OSBORN, LIVES AND ASKED FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM. HE IS IN PRISON TODAY AND FACING TRIAL FOR HIS LIFE.

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IN THE RUMOR-RIDDEN ATMOSPHERE OF THIS ONE-PARTY STATE

UNDER TIGHT MILITARY CONTROL, SUSPICION LINGERS, PARTICULARLY AMONG OPPONENTS OF PRESIDENT NE WIN'S RULE, THAT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY MAY HAVE ASSISTED IN THE

CAPTURE OF CAPT. OHN KYAW MYINT, ACCUSED AS A LEADER IN A CONSPIRACY TO ASSASSINATE THE PRESIDENT AND HIS TWO PRINCIPAL AIDES.

BURMA HAS NOT ANNOUNCED THE INCIDENT, BUT IN ITS ONLY STATEMENT ON THE PLOT, ON JULY 20, IT IDENTIFIED THE CAPTAIN AS A COUP LEADER AND SAID ARRESTS OF THE PLOTTERS BEGAN ON JULY 2.

AMBASSADOR OSBORN SAID HIS CONTACTS WITH BURMESE AUTHORITIES, WHOM HE DECLINED TO IDENTIFY, WERE LIMITED TO THE STRICT MINIMUM AND CONSTITUTED NO ASSISTANCE IN THE CAPTAIN'S SUBSEQUENT ARREST.

HE SAID HE CALLED ON THE AUTHORITIES THE FOLLOWING MORNING TO REPORT THAT A MAN CLAIMING TO BE AN OFFICER HAD REQUESTED ASYLUM AND WAS INFORMED THAT THE EMBASSY WOULD HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO HAND HIM OVER TO THE AUTHORITIES IF THEY ASKED FOR HIM.

-----CONCERN ABOUT COMPLICITY

THE MAN THEN CHOSE TO LEAVE, THE AMBASSADOR TOLD THE AUTHORITIES. MR.OSBORN SAID THAT HE HAD NOT TOLD THE BURMESE GOVERNMENT THE MAN'S NAME.

THE EMBASSY'S JUSTIFICATION FOR PASSING THE INFORMATION ON TO THE BURMESE AUTHORITIES IS THAT IT DID NOT WANT THE GOVERNMENT TO SUSPECT AMERICAN COMPLICITY IN THE REPORTED COUP ATTEMPT. IT CAN ALSO BE ASSUMED THAT THE EMBASSY FEARED THE INCIDENT MIGHT HAVE BEEN A PROVOCATION DESIGNED TO EMBARRASS THE UNITED STATES OR TEST ITS ATTITUDE TO A POSSIBLE COUP.

THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY IN GENERAL AGREES WITH THE AMERICAN VIEW THAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GRANT THE CAPTAIN ASYLUM SINCE THERE IS NO WAY IN WHICH IT COULD HAVE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO LEAVE BURMA.

-----DISCLOSURE OF PLOT

ACCORDING TO AMBASSADOR OSBORN, THE CAPTAIN TOLD THE DIPLOMATS WHO TALKED WITH HIM THAT HE HAD BEEN PART OF A PLOT, THAT THE PLOT HAD BEEN UNCOVERED AND THAT HE

FEARED IMMINENT ARREST.

APPARENTLY IN LINE WITH CURRENT ANTITERRORIST SECURITY PRACTICES, EMBASSY OFFICIALS, TO REMOVE ANY POSSIBLE THREAT TO THE AMBASSADOR, PERSUADED THE FUGITIVE TO

BOARD AN EMBASSY CAR AND BE DRIVEN INTO THE CITY. THE ATTEMPT TO PERSUADE HIM TO LEAVE WAS MADE DURING THE RIDE, AND THE CAPTAIN, ACCORDING TO EMBASSY SOURCES, VOLUNTARILY GOT OUT OF THE CAR DOWNTOWN.

IT WAS LEARNED INDEPENDENTLY THAT MR. OSBORN HAD NOT NOTIFIED THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROTOCOL, BUT HAD MADE HIS REPORT TO COL. TIN OO, THE CHIEF OF INTELLIGENCE. THE GOVERNMENT ALLEGED IN ITS JULY 20 ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE COLONEL WAS ONE OF THE THREE INTENDED VICTIMS OF THE PLOT.

END TEXT. KISSINGER

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